

Spring 1-15-2010

## ENG 3600-001: The Bible as Literature

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### Recommended Citation

Searle, William, "ENG 3600-001: The Bible as Literature" (2010). *Spring 2010*. 101.  
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Dr. William J. Searle

English 3600—001—11:00 to 11:50—MWF—CH 3150

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Office Hours: 12:00 to 12:50 MWF; 3:00 to 3:50 Fri and by appointment

The following texts are used for English 3600:

Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Editors. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard U. Press, 1987.

John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, Anthony D. York. *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*. Fourth Edition. New York, New York: Oxford U. Press, 2000.

Wayne B. Weeks. Editor. *The Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Edition*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1993.

Attendance: Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 55 of the 2007-2008 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course and never performs to his or her potential when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency—severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.

Departmental statement on plagiarism: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to and including a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

Grading: There will be a final and a midterm, each worth 20 percent; frequent group work, reading check quizzes, and perhaps a group project, worth 30 percent; and a medium-length paper (6 to 8 pages of typewritten text) worth 30 percent, due approximately 5 classes before the end of the semester. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not a valid excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations contact the Coordinator of the offices of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Course Description:

A best seller since the invention of the printing press, and, for at least a thousand years before that, a crucial text in the West, the Bible, as comprehensive as it is rich, still compels our attention today for its diversity, literary craft, and influence upon later writers. To those familiar with its content, there is virtually no area of human experience that is unexplored, no literary style that does not appear, and no archetype that does not come alive within its pages.

Antedating both Chaucer and Dante, and in large part, Virgil, by many centuries, and, in some portions, perhaps Homer as well, the bible has cast its imaginative spell upon such English speaking writers as gifted and distinct as Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, and T.S. Eliot. Closer to home, and more recently, Flannery O'Connor, John Updike, Larry Woiwode, and Rita Dove are either aware of or echo its many chords. Can any student receive a truly liberal education without knowing the literary dimension of this most significant work? Hardly.

Class procedure will consist of very informal lecture and discussion periods, group work, and when relevant video. Grades will be based on class participation, occasional reading check quizzes, a medium-length paper, a midterm, and a final.

### A Very Tentative Outline for English 3600

Wk#1—Mon. Jan. 11—Discussion of course and assignment of texts

Suggested reading: Chapter I, "The Bible as Literature," in *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction* (BAL)

Wed. " 13—video, most probably, a segment of the documentary  
*Who Wrote the Bible?*

Fri. " 15—Genesis, chapters 1-3 in *The Harper/Collins Study Bible* (HSB)

Wk#2—Mon. " 18—KING'S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE—NO CLASSES

Wed/ " 20—Genesis, chapters 4-11 in HSB, video, reading check quiz, or  
Group work.

Fri. " 22—Genesis, chapters 12-25 in HSB, the Abraham Story, video

Wk#3—Mon. " 25—Genesis, the Abraham Story, video

Suggested reading: J.P. Fokkelman's essay "Genesis" in  
*The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Guide)

Wed. " 27—Distribution and discussion of essay assignment –due

Wk#3 (cont)

Wed. “ 27—April 20

Fri. “ 29—Genesis: chapters 26-36 in HSB; Isaac and the story of Jacob;  
Graded group work.

Wk#4—Mon.Feb. 1—Genesis: chapters 37-50; the Joseph story; reading check quiz or  
Group work.

Wed. 3—Genesis: the Joseph story, video?

Fri. “ 5—Exodus: chapters 1-13 in HSB, video

Suggested reading: J. P. Fokkelman’s essay “Exodus” in Guide

Wk#5—Mon. “ 8—Exodus: chapters 14-25 in HSB, graded group work, perhaps video

Wed. “ 10—Exodus: chapters 26-35 in HSB, video

Fri. “ 12—LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY—NO CLASS

Wk#6—Mon. “ 15—Excerpts from Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus—Handout on  
major themes and issues in those books

Wed. “17—Book of Joshua, graded group work, handout on Assyrian  
Military narratives.

Suggested reading: David M. Gunn’s “Joshua and Judges” in  
Guide

Fri. “ 19—Joshua, graded group work

Wk#7—Mon 22—Judges, chapters 1-16 in HSB—reading check quiz, Deborah and  
Barak, Jael and Sisera, Samson and Delilah

Wed. 24—Conclude Judges

Fri. “ 26—Book of Ruth; Study Guide for midterm distributed.

Suggested reading: Jack M. Sasson’s “Ruth” in Guide

Wk#8—Mon Mar 1—1 Samuel: Samuel, Saul, and the Philistine Crisis, video

Wed. 3-Midterm: on Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, etc.

Fri. — 5-- Samuel: Jonathan, Michal, and the rise of David.

Wk#9-Mon. “ 8---2 Samuel: David and Bathsheba, rebellion, death of David

Wed. “ 10—2 portraits of Solomon: 1 Kings: Chapters 3-11 and 2 Chronicles:  
1-9:31

Suggested reading: George Savran’s “1 and 2 Kings” in Guide

Wk#9 (cont.)

Fri. “ 12—Book of Esther

Suggested reading: Jack M. Sasson’s “Esther” in Guide

SPRING RECESS—MARCH 13 THRU 21—NO CLASSES

Wk#10-Mon. Mar. 22—Handout on the prophets—selections from HSB

Student conferences on the final paper: MTThF for the next several weeks.

Suggested reading: chapter Viii of BAL, “The Prophetic Writings”

Wed. “ 24—The Book of Job; graded group work.

Fri. “ 26—The Book of Job

Suggested reading: Moshe Greenberg’s “Job” in the Guide

Wk#11-Mon. “ 29—If time permits, selected psalms

Wed. “ 31—If time permits, Song of Songs

Suggested reading: Francis Landy’s “Song of Songs” in Guide

Fri. Apr. 2—Book of Jonah

Suggested reading: James P. Ackerman’s “Jonah” in Guide

Wk#12-Mon. “ 5—The Gospel of Mark

Suggested reading: Chapter XII, “The Hellenistic Background of the New Testament” in BAL

Wed. “ 7—The Gospel of Mark

Suggested reading: John Drury’s “Mark” in Guide

Fri. “ 9—The Gospel of Matthew

Suggested reading ; Frank Kermode’s “Matthew” in Guide

Wk#13—Mon. Apr. 12—The Gospel of Matthew

Suggested reading: Chapter XIV of BAL, “The Gospels,”  
a superb overview

Wed. “ 14—The Gospel of Matthew  
Fri. “ 16—The Gospel of Luke

Suggested reading: John Drury’s “Luke” in Guide

Wk#14—Mon. “ 19—The Gospel of Luke

Wed. “ 21—Paper Due: Gospel of John  
Fri. “ 23—Gospel of John

Suggested reading: Frank Kermode’s “John” in Guide

Wk#15—Mon. “ 26—Acts of the Apostles

Suggested reading: Chapter XV “Acts and Letters” in  
BAL

Wed. “ 28—Acts of the Apostles

Suggested reading: James A. Robinson’s “Acts” in Guide

Fri. “ 30—Loose ends of Acts; review and evaluation of course; Study  
Guide distributed.

FINAL EXAMS: MAY 1 THRU MAY 7 (everything after midterm).